

# A Portfolio of Mormon Painters

Consider the next few pages a tour of a few mountain peaks only—there isn't space to explore all the peaks and slopes! Among Latter-day Saint painters some have, through many fine works, come to stand out as exemplary of the best of their period.

We have chosen to arrange them in a rough chronology of the paintings' subject matter, beginning with an interpretation of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, two other events from Joseph Smith's life, and then the migration of the Saints to the West, some representative scenes of the unfamiliar environment and people they found there and gradually began to understand and love. The portfolio ends with some scenes representing Mormon values, particularly the family and family life.

Minerva K. Teichert (1889-1976) was a thoroughly Mormon painter—her scenes of Book of Mormon life have strikingly illustrated Book of Mormon articles in the *ENSIGN* for the last year; her

mural in the World Room of the Manti Temple is vivid and impressive (it replaced an earlier mural during remodeling in the 1940s). As one of ten children, she sandwiched her art studies in and around family needs, supporting herself, a brother, and a sister through high school in Pocatello, Idaho, by selling pen-and-ink drawings.

After struggling to study at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Art Students League in New York, she came home in 1917 to marry a Wyoming rancher. Throughout her life she painted her country and its people. This painting of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery receiving the Melchizedek priesthood from Peter, James, and John shows her impressionistic style, with a sense of being caught in the middle of a story (p. 41).

Danquart Weggeland (1827-1918) was born in Norway and studied for two years at the Academy in Copenhagen. He came to Salt Lake in 1862 and painted scenery for the Salt Lake Theater. "If it had not been for [these] commissions, my rent could not



have been paid," he said. He also took in pupils and accepted temple commissions, serving as foreman on the Salt Lake mural project and painting the animals in the Garden Room himself. Thus he supported his family with his paintbrush, unlike many other painters who could only paint in their "free time." A "genial and effective teacher," he gave many of Utah's second-generation artists valuable instruction.

Many of his paintings were of historical subjects, including his moving depiction in strong, subdued colors of the Prophet Joseph rebuking the guards (p. 42).

Gary E. Smith (1942- ), raised on a ranch in Oregon and converted to the Church in 1966, has found inspiration for many years in gospel subjects, particularly Church history. He abstracts solid shapes instead of making photographically realistic likenesses, so that the emphasis is on the movement, color, and relationship of the spaces to each other. In this recent painting showing Joseph Smith supervising the construction of the Nauvoo Temple (p. 43), he makes unusual use of color to achieve an effect of light and movement.

C.C.A. Christensen (1831-1912), a Danish painter, reached Utah in 1857, the Danish flag flying from his cart and his tattered trousers flapping about his legs. Besides training for five winters at the Royal Academy of Arts in Copenhagen, he had learned toy making, carpentry, and how to make paper cutouts. Like Weggeland, he painted scenery for the Salt Lake Theater. He created an impressive series of Mormon history panoramas and used them to give missionary lectures, and also painted murals in the Manti Temple.

His painting *Immigration of Saints* (p. 44) has been called "a gentle masterpiece" and praised for "its modeling and grouping of figures," for being "mellow in its color, frank and witty in its depiction of the everyday lives of people, touching in its praise of old-fashioned virtues." (A personal note: he included himself in the painting, sitting in the left foreground, sketching, while the woman he would later marry looks at him curiously.)

Lorus Pratt (1855-1923), a son of Elder Orson Pratt, studied abroad, winning honors at the Academie Julian in Paris. He is especially noted for his portraits, austere and disciplined in style. In *Hay-making* (p. 45) the lush summer colors are focused by the distant temple, its severe lines contrasting with the massed lines of the farmer and the foliage. When the Salt Lake Temple was being completed, he was asked to paint the foliage in the Garden Room.

One of the second generation of Mormon painters is H.L.A. Culmer (1854-99), whose dramatic view of Augusta Bridge, one of the Southwest's spectacular rock formations, appears on page 46. He was one of several painters who admired Albert Bierstadt's and Thomas Moran's flamboyant

and intensely colored depictions of the American West, particularly of the stark deserts, the rugged mountains, and the Grand Canyon. Although Culmer and such pioneer painters as John Tullidge, Alfred Lambourne, George Beard, and Reuben Kirkham were influenced by romantic trends in European painting known as the Düsseldorf school, they were essentially self-taught.

A.B. Wright (1875-1952), a Salt Lake painter, was much praised for his early portraits during a time when he was influenced by Whistler and Michelangelo. A landscape appears on page 47. He painted murals in the Hawaii, Cardston, and Arizona temples, and then returned to France, where he had studied, to paint in 1937. He was still there when World War II broke out and was imprisoned by the Germans, but continued to paint with supplies that his friends and family managed to get to him. He died at the age of seventy-seven in France and is buried there. (Dan Weggeland and his colleague, George M. Ottinger, were between them the two most important art teachers in Utah; and they consistently counseled their better pupils to study in the East and in Europe. Many of them took that advice; and while in Salt Lake, some of them were close enough geographically and chronologically to be called "the 20th Ward Group." Clustered in the same neighborhood were George Ottinger, Alfred Lambourne, H.L.A. Culmer, Mahonri M. Young, A.B. Wright, and Lee Greene Richards.

(J.T. Harwood arrived in Paris in 1888 and enrolled at the Academie Julian, where he was joined by sculptor Cyrus E. Dallin within two weeks. The First Presidency, looking ahead to the completion of the Salt Lake Temple, later sent John Hafen, J.B. Fairbanks, and Lorus Pratt on missions to study art in France in preparation for painting the murals in the Salt Lake Temple. They arrived in the summer of 1890. John W. Clawson and Edwin Evans joined the little group of Utah artists the same year, followed by L.A. Ramsey in 1897, Mary Teasdel in 1899, Lee Greene Richards and Mahonri Young in 1901, A.B. Wright in 1902, and over a dozen other painters as the twentieth century progressed.

(The Academie emphasized accurate drawing, and all of the studio space was devoted to sketching from live models. If students wished to paint, they did it elsewhere—and the training in technique was necessary! John Hafen, in a letter to his wife the year they arrived, commented, "None of the Utah painters knows how to draw the big toe.")

J.T. Harwood (1860-1940), according to some critics, had "greater natural gifts" than any other Utah painter. His landscapes and still lifes show his fine control of structure and color. In addition to his studies in France, he spent a year at the Academy of Design in San Francisco, where he won every honor available to students. He also studied at the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris after passing a







*Building the Nauvoo Temple*, Gary E. Smith (1975), 48" x 60", oil, collection of Franklin D. Johnson, Salt Lake City.

*Joseph Rebuking the Guards*, Danquart Weggeland (no date), 28" x 22", charcoal, LDS Church Curator's Division, Historical Department.











*Emigration of the Saints*, C.C.A. Christensen (1878), 36" x 48", oil, Daughters of Utah Pioneers Collection, DUP Museum, Salt Lake City.



Haymaking, Lorus Pratt (1894), 30" x 48", oil, Utah State Historical Society.







Augusta Natural Bridge, H.L.A. Culmer (no date), 42" x 58", oil, Utah Arts Institute, Division of Development Services, State of Utah.

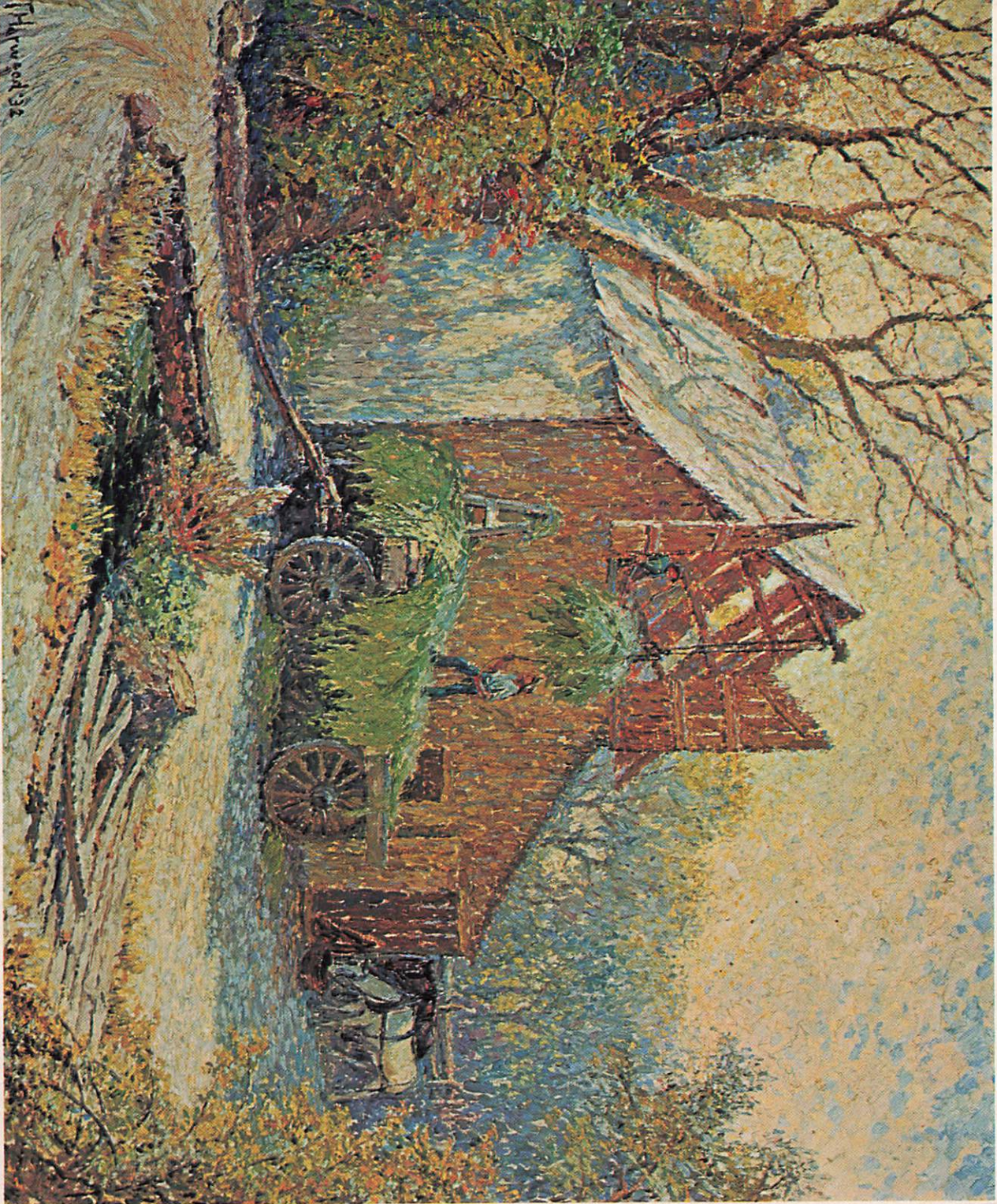
L.A. CULMER





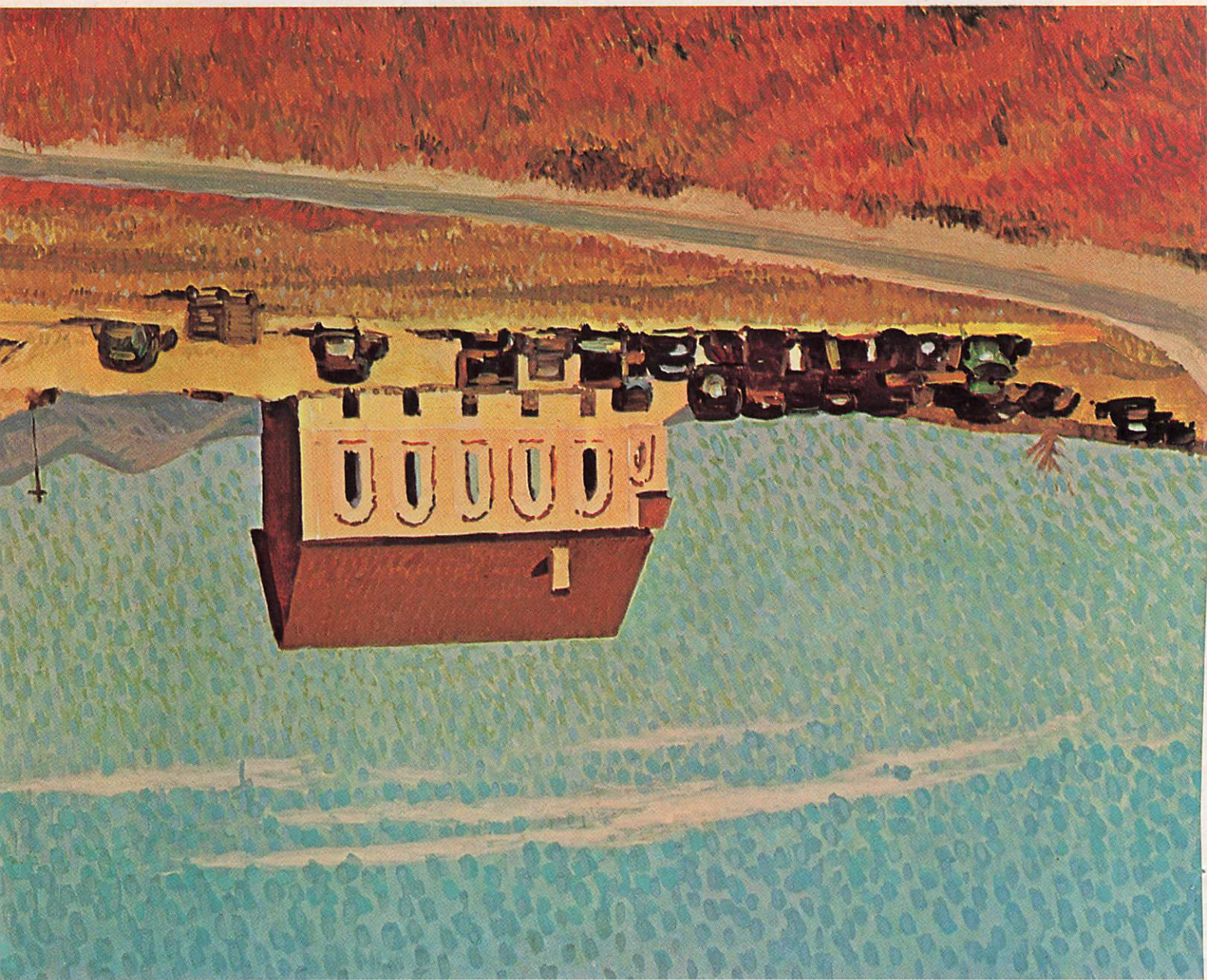
*Fishing*, A.B. Wright (1913), 16" x 24", oil, Springville Museum of Art.





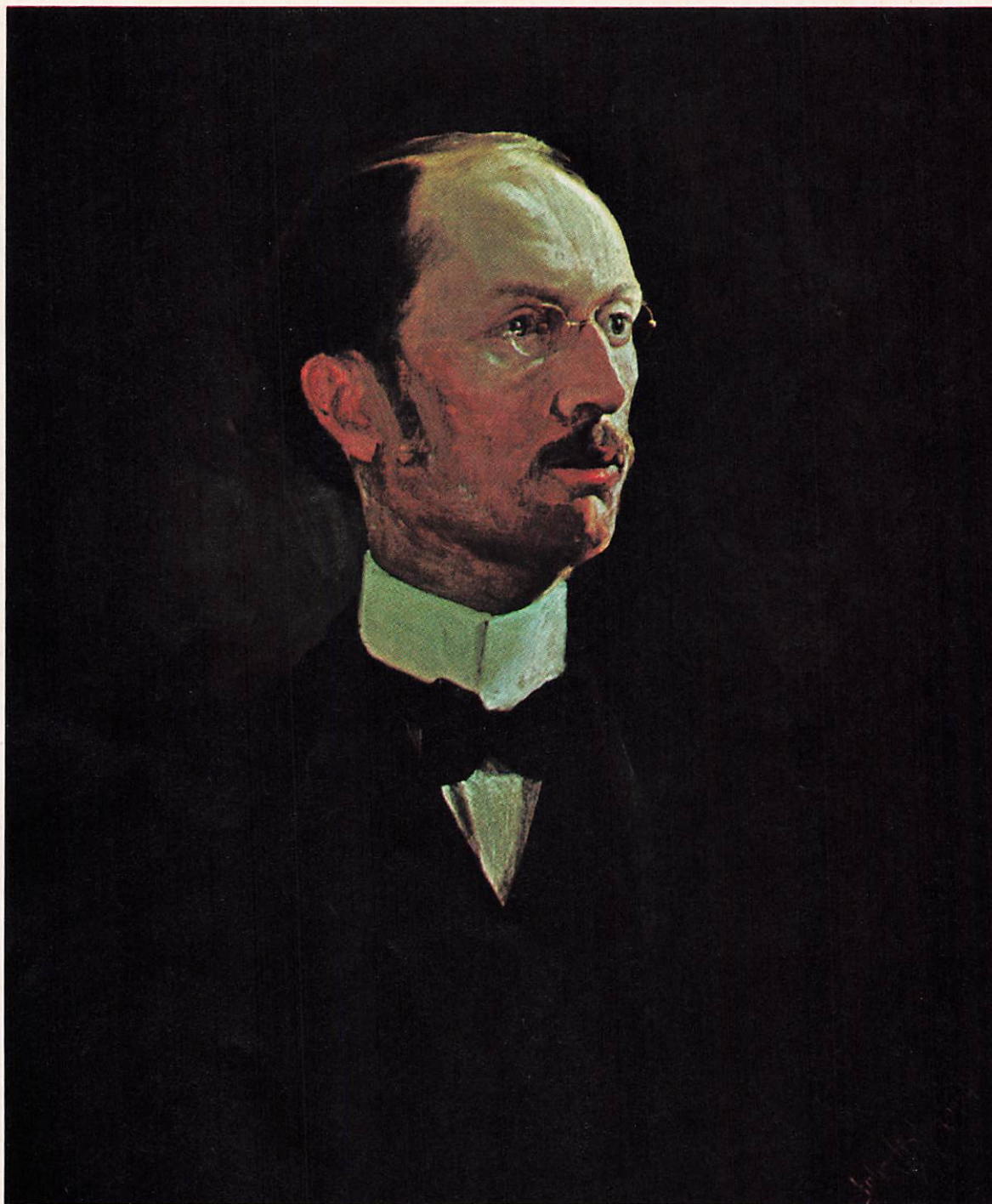
Pioneer Pail, J.T. Harwood (1932), 24" x 30", oil, permanent collection, University of Utah Union.





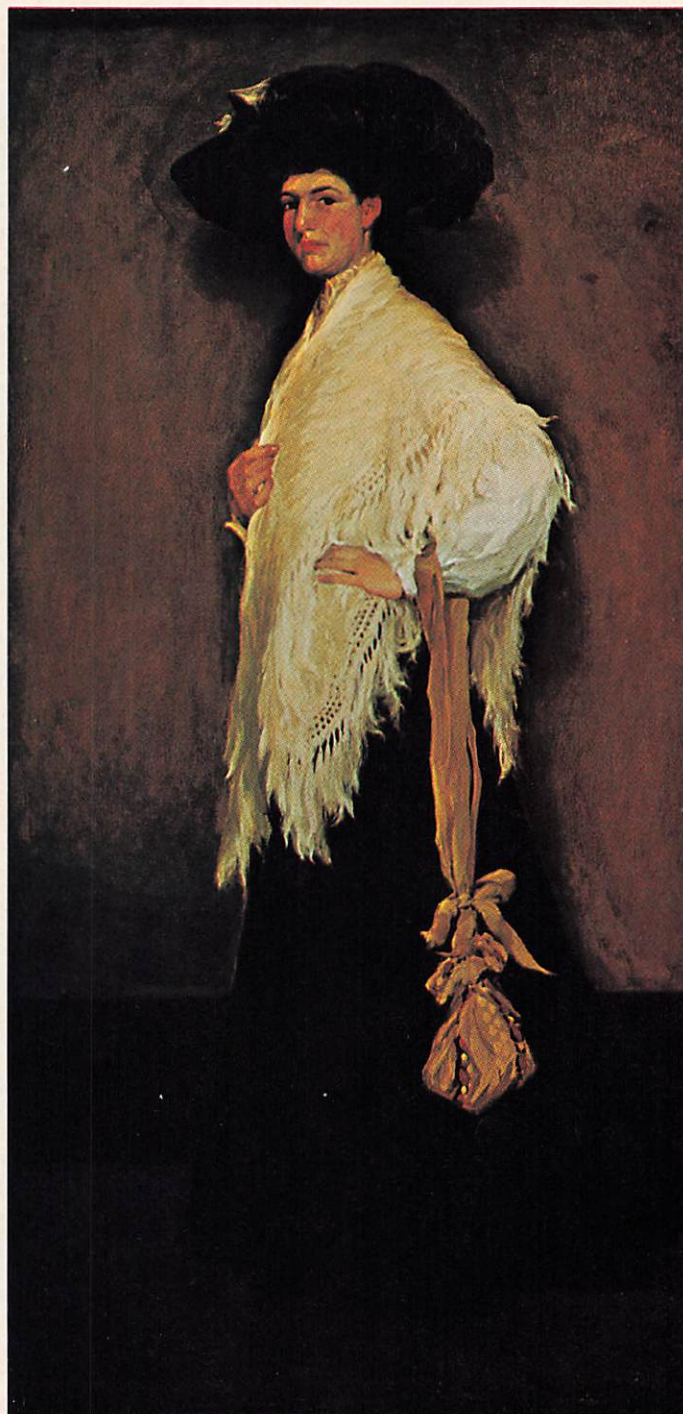
*Country Funeral*, LeConte Stewart (1948), 22" x 30", oil, private collection.





*George Albert Smith, John Hafen (1904), 22" x 27", oil, LDS Church Curator's Division, Historical Department.*





*The Green Bag*, Lee Greene Richards (1904), 79" x 40", oil, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah.





*Navajo Woman and Goats*, Mahonri M. Young (c. 1925), 19" x 21", oil, Brigham Young University permanent collection.





*Country Fair*, B.F. Larsen (c. 1940), 45" x 37", oil, Utah Arts Institute, Division of Development Services, State of Utah.









*Blessing*, Trevor Southey (1972), 48" x 48", acrylic, collection of Byron and Marla Goodrich, Agoura, California.

*Mother and Child*, Mary Teasdel (no date), 31" x 26", oil, Utah Arts Institute, Division of Development Services, State of Utah.





Edgemont Treehouse, Dale T. Fletcher (1976), 48" x 70", oil, Springville High School.



rigorous examination. The energy and control of his painting of a haying crew (p. 48) show why he was sometimes called a "strenuous" painter. An exacting and excellent teacher, he influenced Mahonri Young, Lee Greene Richards, A.B. Wright, and Mary Teasdel, among others.

LeConte Stewart (1891- ) of Kaysville, Utah, also created temple murals. A missionary on the Laie plantation in Hawaii when the temple was being constructed, he produced the starkly bold landscapes in the World Room at the time that his former teachers A.B. Wright and Edwin Evans were creating their own masterpieces in adjoining rooms, an effort that brought generations of artists together in a way that has not occurred since. He also painted murals in the Arizona and Cardston Temples. Since *Country Funeral*, an early work in pointillist style (p. 49), he has made a near-specialty out of the subdued colors and soft angles of Utah's spring and autumn.

John Hafen (1856-1910) was a devoted artist who lived in deepest poverty because he would not compromise his creativity to satisfy public taste. As a consequence, his fine paintings have been fully appreciated only by later generations. He and his devoted wife managed to make ends meet in Springville, Utah, until his death at age fifty-four, and many of his finest paintings are part of the permanent collection of the Springville Art Museum. His gift of the landscape *Mountain Stream* in 1903 was the first item in the collection. He painted murals in the Salt Lake Temple and many fine portraits of Church leaders, including the sensitive portrait of the young George Albert Smith on page 50.

Lee Greene Richards (1878-1950) was encouraged by his grandmother, Louisa (Lula) Greene Richards (see her poem on page 64), when he first started painting; she even let him use her own paintbox. He studied in France through great personal sacrifice after his mission. His portrait of his aunt, Blanche Richards, titled *The Green Bag* (p. 51), fell only one vote short of winning a medal at the prestigious Paris Fall Salon of 1904 and led the list of honorable mentions. In addition to many fine portraits of General Authorities and Relief Society leaders, he also painted murals in the Idaho Falls Temple.

Mahonri M. Young (1877-1957), one of the most significant artists of Utah, was primarily a sculptor, etcher, and draftsman who took up oils late in life to produce vivid landscapes and figures, like his striking Navajo woman on page 52. His interest in sculpting began with the wooden toys his father whittled for him when he was recuperating from an illness at the age of five. Studying in Europe from 1901-5, he saw an exhibit of rather amazing paintings by a young Spanish artist named Pablo Picasso; but Young was more influenced by the giants of Italian painting, like Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto. Among his landmark works for the

Church are the Seagull Monument and the statues of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, all on Temple Square; the This Is the Place Monument, with 144 figures; and the marble statue of Brigham Young which stands in the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C.

B.F. Larsen (1882- ), like many earlier Mormon painters, studied abroad in Paris (including a time at the Academie Julian); he also studied in America at the Art Institute of Chicago. Like LeConte Stewart, Larsen rejected the classical eighteenth-century philosophy of painting being taught at the academies in favor of more modern techniques. *Country Fair* (p. 53) represents some of his earlier work, when he was experimenting with a strong realistic style. Known for his traditional Western landscapes, he has developed a subtle palette and a more introspective style in recent years.

Mary Teasdel (1863-1937) had a great deal of family encouragement for her artistic endeavors. Through the generosity of her father and brothers and her own careful saving, she became one of the first women from Utah to seriously study painting in Europe in the twentieth century. In addition to studying with French painters, she also joined James McNeil Whistler when he opened his Paris studio. She had a high reputation among her own people—she was awarded three first prizes in landscape and watercolors in the 1908 Utah State Fair. Her effects with light and clarity, as in her portrait of a mother and child (p. 54), have been much praised.

Trevor Southey (1940- ) was raised in Rhodesia but came to BYU as a convert to the Church. Like the first generation of Mormon painters, also converts, Southey is fascinated with Mormon subjects—especially theology. An extraordinarily fine draftsman, his beautifully modeled figure drawings and paintings portray his vision of the plan of salvation, the atonement, the premortal existence, the resurrection, and other subjects. In this familiar scene of the blessing of a baby (p. 55), the child still radiates the glory of its premortal existence, the strong priesthood bearers seeming to acknowledge that spiritual reality by their reverence.

Dale T. Fletcher (1929- ) was born in Logan, Utah, and schooled at Utah State University and the University of California at Berkeley; he taught art in Utah's grade and high schools before joining the faculty of Brigham Young University in 1965. Much of his current work, including the nostalgic evocation of a treehouse on page 56, shows a painstaking fidelity to detail as a means of conveying an essentially symbolic message. □

(Material for this article was drawn in large part from James L. Haseltine, 100 Years of Utah Painting: Selected Works from the 1840s to the 1940s, Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center and Salt Lake Tribune, 1965, and from Michael Hunter of the Curator's Division, Church Historical Department.)

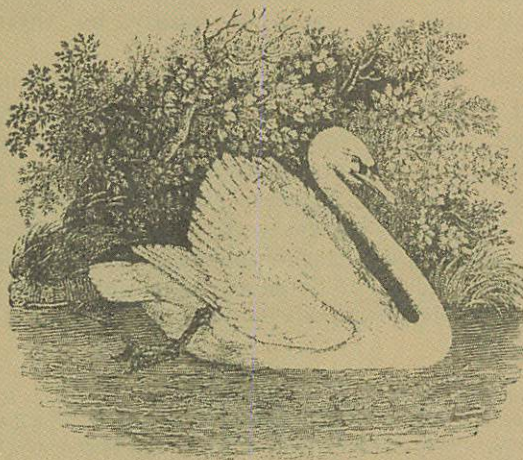


## To a Dying Girl

By Clinton F. Larsen

*How quickly must she go?  
She calls dark swans from mirrors everywhere:  
From halls and porticos, from pools of air.  
How quickly must she know?  
They wander through the fathoms of her eye,  
Waning southerly until their cry  
Is gone where she must go.  
How quickly does the cloudfire streak the sky,  
Tremble on the peaks, then cool and die?  
She moves like evening into night,  
Forgetful as the swans forget their flight  
Or spring the fragile snow,  
So quickly she must go.*

(From *The Lord of Experience*, Salt Lake City: Promised Land Publications, 1968.)



## Deliverance

By Marylou Cunningham Shaver

*John 16:21*

*"A woman in . . . travail  
[Bear down, they said]  
hath sorrow, because  
her hour is come."*

*I watched the clock  
and thought  
how glad I was for you.  
Someone wiped my face  
and placed a cone  
upon my nose.  
I shook it away.  
"Oh let him breathe  
[just give me strength]  
let him breathe his first breath  
clear as mine."*

*For a moment  
it was very black  
and pain pushed me down  
and you out  
of my night.*

*"But as soon as she is delivered  
of the child, she remembereth  
no more the anguish,  
for joy."*

*And I would travel the night  
again for you.  
I would travel the night again  
for this moment of light.*